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Letter dated 20 October 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Nigeria, the Security Council is scheduled to hold an open debate on women and peace and security on Tuesday, 25 October 2011.

The debate will provide an opportunity for the Security Council to review progress in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related commitments on women and peace and security. In order to help steer the discussion on the subject, we have prepared a concept note entitled "Women's participation and role in conflict prevention and mediation" (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) U. Joy **Ogwu**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 20 October 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Women's participation and role in conflict prevention and mediation: concept note

A. Background

The participation and representation of women in decision-making forums, institutions and mechanisms related to conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery and the importance of mainstreaming gender equality perspectives at all stages of peace processes is at the core of all five Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security (resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010)). In resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council urged Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict (para. 1) and called upon all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective (para. 8).

The 10-year review of progress in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) showed that, while many important initiatives and strategies have been launched at the international, regional and national levels, progress has been uneven. Many gaps and challenges still remain in the achievement of the goal of guaranteeing women's participation in decision-making in all stages of peace processes as well as in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. Despite the decade-long recognition of the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention, more needs to be done systematically to integrate women and peace and security issues in preventive diplomacy, early warning, and human rights and security monitoring. More is also required to address the root causes militating against women's effective participation in conflict prevention.

The striking absence of women from formal peace negotiations, in particular, reveals a troubling gap between global and regional commitments and actual practice. Research shows that the inclusion of women on negotiating and observer teams in combination with the application of gender expertise to substantive components of peace accords has helped to ensure that peace agreements better address issues of social inclusion and equality, as well as specific aspects of gender-based discrimination and conflict-related sexual violence. Exclusion of women and lack of gender expertise in negotiations can produce near-irreversible setbacks for women's rights, leaving out crucial issues such as women's engagement in post-conflict governance, women's access to economic opportunity, and justice and reparations for war crimes against women and girls. Women and peace and security issues tend to be addressed at a relatively late stage of the conflict prevention and mediation cycle. By that time it is often too late for women to ensure that their rights and needs are addressed in peace accords and institutional arrangements. Preventive diplomacy in particular should prioritize women's participation and address women's needs.

The importance of the inclusion of dedicated gender expertise and greater numbers of women in peace negotiations has been emphasized in a range of reports of the Secretary-General, including on mediation, peacebuilding and women and peace and security. The Secretary-General's report of 2009 on enhancing mediation and its support activities (S/2009/189), for example, examined the various challenges faced by the United Nations and its partners in providing mediation assistance to parties in conflict. Among its recommendations was a call to ensure that women are represented in senior mediation posts. In September 2010, the Secretary-General's report on women's participation in peacebuilding (S/2010/466) provided more elaborate recommendations, including setting up regular briefings for negotiating parties on gender issues relevant to peace agreement provisions, a concerted investment in strategies that have proved to enhance women's participation in negotiating teams, support to context-appropriate mechanisms for consultations with women's civil society organizations, and efforts to ensure seats for women from civil society in international engagement meetings such as donor conferences.

To accelerate implementation in this critical area, concerted and dedicated efforts are needed by international, regional and national actors, in particular those providing technical and financial support to peace processes. Positive results appear to emanate from the use of a range of specific strategies. These include the use of targeted special policies and measures to increase women's participation including in negotiations; increased availability and quality of gender expertise for peacemaking and mediation processes; rosters and training to assist with identifying and preparing women candidates for deployment as mediators; building partnerships and supporting civil society peace coalitions to leverage influence and impact; and overcoming obstacles to women's participation by adopting policies that focus on creating enabling environments for women (including arrangements for security, travel, childcare etc.). Too many of these initiatives, however, remain small-scale, ad hoc and/or underfunded.

B. Rationale for the choice of theme

- Conviction of the cost-effectiveness, in human and material terms, of preventing conflict, including through the use of preventive diplomacy.
- Realization that involving women in the peacekeeping, mediation and peacebuilding process has a direct impact on stability and sustainable development.
- Concern that the critical role of women in conflict prevention has remained largely unappreciated, unrecognized and undocumented.
- Need for further study by the Secretary-General of the situation and role of women involved in conflict prevention around the world — to be included in his report to the Council for its high-level review of 2015.
- Need for a comprehensive, holistic and coordinated approach to addressing the issue of the participation of women in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy.
- Necessity to build a linkage between the Council's decisions on women and peace and security and on preventive diplomacy.

- Recognition that conflict prevention strategies should address the root causes of conflict, as well as include such initiatives as early warning, preventive deployment, mediation, peacekeeping, practical disarmament, accountability measures, post-conflict peacebuilding, among others.
- Agreement with the Secretary-General that "every day, we can see the cost of the failure to prevent".

C. Expected outcome

The open debate should result in the unanimous adoption of a presidential statement that establishes a clear linkage between the Council's initiatives on women and peace and security and initiatives on preventive diplomacy. The statement should also emphasize women's participation in decision-making and inclusion in all mediation and peacebuilding processes, as well as recognize the particular needs of women involved in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. The statement should also recognize the need to address the root causes of conflict, especially as they affect women.

D. Issues for consideration

Members of the Council and other Member States are invited to consider the following issues:

- The role and participation of women in conflict prevention.
- Review of progress in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related commitments on women and peace and security.
- Ways and means to enhance women's participation and role in formal and informal conflict prevention and mediation efforts, including measures such as capacity-building support for women's peace movements in conflict and post-conflict situations, the establishment of a rapid response roster of women mediators and mediators with sector-specific gender expertise, arrangements for observer status for women's civil society groups at peace negotiations, donor conferences and international engagement meetings, and steps to increase the number of women in the Foreign Service and ensure that women diplomats are engaged in leadership roles in conflict resolution.
- Coordinated and coherent support by the United Nations system to achieve greater effectiveness of peacemaking efforts through the increased participation of women and strengthened capacity to address gender issues in peace and post-conflict planning processes.
- Role of Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations in ensuring that women's civil society and other stakeholder groups are informed, supported and represented in peacemaking and decision-making processes.
- Ways and means by which the Security Council through its own work can strengthen attention to and contribute to accelerating the implementation of women and peace and security commitments.

- The use of early warning, preventive deployment, mediation, peacekeeping, practical disarmament and peacebuilding as tools of preventive diplomacy.

- Examination of the political, humanitarian and moral imperatives of conflict prevention, including the interconnection of needs that start or fuel conflict.

- The linkage between the Council's initiatives on women and peace and security and on preventive diplomacy.

E. Format

- Open debate in the Council, with the participation of Member States, the Secretary-General, key United Nations officials, and a representative of non-governmental organizations.

- A side event, jointly co-hosted by Nigeria, Brazil and Portugal, with the active collaboration of UN-Women, will be held on 25 October 2011 prior to the open debate. Various stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in the side event.